

# *The Daily Progress*

## **Legal Aid surpasses goal of \$1.85 million for center**

**By Liesel Nowak**

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The Legal Aid Justice Center has surpassed its three-year \$1.85 million fund-raising goal to pay for the renovation and purchase of its new Preston Avenue headquarters, center officials announced.

The center — which provides free legal services to the poor in civil cases — has in two weeks raised more than \$25,000, enough to receive two challenge grants from Michigan-based Kresge Foundation and Charlottesville's Perry Foundation.

Thursday's deadline fell on Law Day, designated by Congress four decades ago as a day to reflect on the role of justice in American society.

"What is truly amazing is the breadth of the support we have received from the community," Executive Director Alex Gulotta said. "In three short years, we have moved from having a handful of donors to nearly a thousand. Our heartfelt thanks goes out to all of them."

Gulotta attributed the successful fund-raising to the support of the local law community, which came through with more than \$300,000.

"It's important for all of our citizens to have access to legal services, and Legal Aid helps to satisfy that need," local lawyer Ralph Feil said. "It's a major responsibility of the members of the local bar to assist in seeing that people who can't afford legal services receive them."

Local celebrities John Grisham and the Dave Matthews Band have pitched in more than \$500,000 combined. Additional contributions to the center will cover property maintenance and could go toward the renovation of another building behind Legal Aid's offices for another nonprofit to lease.

Once the Bruton Beauty Supply Building, the Legal Aid offices on the corner of 10th Street Northwest and Preston Avenue have been renovated to accommodate the justice center's programs and three other local nonprofits — the Piedmont office of the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society, the Public Housing Association of Residents and the Adult Learning Center for Charlottesville City Schools.